

(No. 90.)

NORTH AMERICAN CONSERVATION CONFERENCE

DECLARATION OF PRINCIPLES.

We recognize the mutual interests of the Nations which occupy the Continent of North America and the dependence of the welfare of each upon its natural resources. We agree that the conservation of these resources is indispensable for the continued prosperity of each Nation.

We recognize that the protection of mutual interests related to natural resources by concerted action, without in any way interfering with the authority of each Nation within its own sphere, will result in mutual benefits, and tend to draw still closer the bonds of existing good will, confidence and respect. Natural resources are not confined by the boundary lines that separate Nations. We agree that no Nation acting alone can adequately conserve them, and we recommend the adoption of concurrent measures for conserving the material foundations of the welfare of all the Nations concerned, and for ascertaining their location and extent.

We recognize as natural resources all materials available for the use of man as means of life and welfare, including those on the surface of the earth, like the soil and the waters; those below the surface, like the minerals; and those above the surface, like the forests. We agree that these resources should be developed, used, and conserved for the future, in the interests of mankind, whose rights and duties to guard and control the natural sources of life and welfare are inherent, perpetual, and indefeasible. We agree that those resources which are necessities of life should be regarded as public utilities, that their ownership entails specific duties to the public, and that as far as possible effective measures should be adopted to guard against monopoly.

PUBLIC HEALTH.

Believing that the conservation movement tends strongly to develop national efficiency in the highest possible degree in our respective countries, we recognize that to accomplish such an object with success, the maintenance and improvement of public health is a first essential.

In all steps for the utilization of natural resources consideration of public health should always be kept in view.

Facts which cannot be questioned demonstrate that immediate action is necessary to prevent further pollution, mainly by sewage, of the lakes, rivers and streams throughout North America. Such pollution, aside from the enormous loss in fertilizing elements entailed thereby, is an immediate and continuous danger to public health, to the health of animals, and, when caused by certain chemical agents, to agriculture. Therefore we recommend that preventive legislation be enacted.

FORESTS.

We recognize that the forests are indispensable to civilization and public welfare. They furnish material for construction and manufacture, and promote the habitability of the earth. We regard the wise use, effective protection, especially from fire, and prompt renewal of the forests on land best adapted to such use, as a public necessity,

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and hence a public duty devolving upon all forest owners alike, whether public, corporate, or individual.

We consider the creation of many and large forest reservations and their permanent maintenance under government control absolutely essential to the public welfare.

We favour the early completion of inventories of forest resources, in order to ascertain the available supply and the rate of consumption and reproduction.

We recommend the extension of technical education and practical field instruction in forest conservation, afforestation, and reforestation, so as to provide efficient forest officers whose knowledge will be available for necessary public information on these subjects.

Believing that excessive taxation on standing timber privately owned is a potent cause of forest destruction by increasing the cost of maintaining growing forests, we agree in the wisdom and justice of separating the taxation of timber land from the taxation of the timber growing upon it, and adjusting both in such a manner as to encourage forest conservation and forest growing.

We agree that the ownership of forest lands, either at the headwaters of streams or upon areas better suited for forest growth than for other purposes, entails duties to the public, and that such lands should be protected with equal effectiveness, whether under public or private ownership.

Forests are necessary to protect the sources of streams, moderate floods, and equalize the flow of waters, temper the climate, and protect the soil; and we agree that all forests necessary for these purposes should be amply safeguarded. We affirm the absolute need of holding for forests, or reforesting, all lands supplying the headwaters of streams, and we therefore favour the control or acquisition of such lands for the public.

The private owners of lands unsuited to agriculture, once forested and now impoverished or denuded, should be encouraged by practical instruction, adjustment of taxation, and in other proper ways, to undertake the reforesting thereof.

Notwithstanding an increasing public interest in forestry, the calamitous and far reaching destruction of forests by fire still continues, and demands immediate and decisive action. We believe that systems of fire guardianship and patrol afford the best means of dealing adequately with fires which occur, whether from natural causes, such as lightning, or in other ways; but we affirm that in addition thereto effective laws are urgently needed to reduce the vast damage from preventable causes.

Apart from fire, the principal cause of forest destruction is unwise and improvident cutting, which, in many cases, has resulted in widespread injury to the climate and the streams. It is therefore of the first importance that all lumbering operations should be carried on under a system of rigid regulation.

WATERS.

We recognize the waters as a primary resource, and we regard their use for domestic and municipal supply, irrigation, navigation, and power, as interrelated public uses, and properly subject to public control. We therefore favour the complete and concurrent development of the streams and their sources for every useful purpose to which they may be put.

The highest and most necessary use of water is for domestic and municipal purposes. We therefore favour the recognition of this principle in legislation, and, where necessary, the subordination of other uses of water thereto.

The superior economy of water transportation over land transportation, as well as its advantages in limiting the consumption of the non-renewable resources, coal and iron, and its effectiveness in the promotion of commerce, are generally acknowledged. We therefore favour the development of inland navigation under general plans adapted to secure the uniform progress of the work and the fullest use of the streams for all purposes. We further express our belief that all waterways so developed should be retained under exclusive public ownership and control.

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We regard the monopoly of waters, and especially the monopoly of water power, as peculiarly threatening. No rights to the use of water powers in streams should hereafter be granted in perpetuity. Each grant should be conditioned upon prompt development, continued beneficial use, and the payment of proper compensation to the public for the rights enjoyed; and should be for a definite period only. Such period should be no longer than is required for reasonable safety of investment. The public authority should retain the right to readjust at stated periods the compensation to the public and to regulate the rates charged, to the end that undue profit or extortion may be prevented.

Where the construction of works to utilize water has been authorized by public authority and such utilization is necessary for the public welfare, provision should be made for the expropriation of any privately owned land and water rights required for such construction.

The interest of the public in the increase of the productiveness of arid lands by irrigation and of wet lands by drainage is manifest. We therefore favour the participation of the public to secure the complete and economical development and use of all water available for irrigation and of all lands susceptible of profitable drainage, in order to insure the widest possible benefit. Special projects should be considered and developed in connection with a general plan for the same watershed. In the matter of irrigation public authority should control the headwaters and provide for the construction of storage reservoirs and for the equitable distribution and use of the stored water.

LANDS.

We recognize land is a fundamental resource, yielding the materials needed for sustaining population, and forming the basis of social organization. Increase in the productivity of the soil is a growing need, and the possession of the land by the men who live upon it not only promotes such productivity, but is also the best guarantee of good citizenship. In the interest of the home-maker, we favour regulation of grazing on public land, the disposal of public lands to actual settlers in areas each sufficient to support a family and the subdivision of excessive holdings of agricultural or grazing land, thereby preventing monopoly.

The preservation of the productivity of the soil is dependent upon rotation of crops, fertilization by natural or artificial means, and improved methods in farm management. The quantity and quality of crops are also dependent upon the careful selection of seed. We therefore favour the distribution by government bureaus of scientific and practical information on these points, and we urge upon all farmers careful attention thereto.

The national importance for grazing of non-irrigable public lands too dry for cultivation, and the public loss occasioned by over-grazing, are generally acknowledged. We therefore favour government control of such lands in order to restore their value, promote settlement, and increase the public resources.

The first requisite for forest or other covering which will conserve the rainfall and promote regularity of water flow is the retention of the soil upon watersheds. We therefore favour the construction of such artificial works as may effect this purpose and the encouragement thereof by remission of taxes, government co-operation, or other suitable means.

MINERALS.

We recognize the mineral resources as forming the chief basis of industrial progress, and regard their use and conservation as essential to the public welfare. The mineral fuels play an indispensable part in our modern civilization. We favour action on the part of each government looking towards reduction of the enormous waste in the exploitation of such fuels, and we direct attention to the necessity for an inventory thereof. Such fuels should hereafter be disposed of by lease under such restrictions

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or regulations as will prevent waste and monopolistic or speculative holding, and supply the public at reasonable prices.

We believe that the surface rights and underground mineral rights in lands should be separately dealt with so as to permit the surface of the land to be utilized to the fullest extent, while preserving government control over the minerals.

Regulations should be adopted looking to the most economical production of coal and other mineral fuels and the prolongation of the supply to the utmost. We favour also the substitution of water power for steam or other power produced by the consumption of fuel.

Great economy in the use of fuel has resulted in the past from the application of scientific invention and the use of improvements in machinery, and further progress can be made in the same direction. We therefore recommend that all possible encouragement and assistance be given in the development and perfecting of means whereby waste in the consumption of fuel can be reduced.

The loss of human life through preventable mining accidents in North America is excessive. Much needless suffering and bereavement result therefrom. Accompanying this loss there is great destruction of valuable mineral property and enhancement of the cost of production. The best method of eliminating these known and admitted evils lies in the enactment and strict enforcement of regulations which will provide the greatest possible security for mine workers and mines. We therefore favour the scientific investigation of the whole subject of mine accidents by the governments participating in this conference, the interchange of information and experience, and the enactment and enforcement of the best regulations that can be devised.

Mineral fertilizers should not be monopolized by private interests, but should be so controlled by public authority as to prevent waste and to promote their production in such quantity and at such price as to make them readily available for use.

PROTECTION OF GAME.

We recognize that game preservation and the protection of bird life are intimately associated with the conservation of natural resources. We therefore favour game protection under regulation, the creation of extensive game preserves, and special protection for such birds as are useful to agriculture.

CONSERVATION COMMISSIONS.

The action of the President of the United States in calling this first conference to consider the conservation of the natural resources of North America was in the highest degree opportune, and the proceedings which have followed, and the information mutually communicated by the representatives assembled, have, we believe, been conducive to the best interests of the countries participating. To derive the greatest possible benefit from the work which has already been done, and to provide proper and effective machinery for future work, there should be established in each country a permanent Conservation Commission.

When such Conservation Commissions have been established, a system of intercommunication should be inaugurated, whereby, at stated intervals, all discoveries, inventions, processes, inventories of natural resources, information of a new and specially important character, and seeds, seedlings, new or improved varieties, and other productions which are of value in conserving or improving any natural resource, shall be transmitted by each Commission to all of the others, to the end that they may be adopted and utilized as widely as possible.

WORLD CONSERVATION CONFERENCE.

The conference of delegates, representatives of the United States, Mexico, Canada, and Newfoundland, having exchanged views and considered the information supplied

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from the respective countries, is convinced of the importance of the movement for the conservation of natural resources on the continent of North America, and believes that it is of such a nature and of such general importance that it should become worldwide in its scope, and therefore suggests to the President of the United States of America that all nations should be invited to join together in conference on the subject of world resources and their inventory, conservation, and wise utilization.

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